

traditional teaching of the Church, Wilson's words represented the starting point from which the discussions of social questions still commonly set out.

The Bible, the Fathers and the Schoolmen, the decretals, church councils, and commentators on the canon law—all these, and not only the first, continued to be quoted as decisive on questions of economic ethics by men to whom the theology and government of the mediaeval Church were an abomination.

What use Wilson made of them, a glance at his book will show.

The writer who, after him, produced the most elaborate discussion of usury in the latter part of the century prefaced his work with a list of pre-Reformation authorities running into several pages."

The author of a practical memorandum on the amendment of the law with regard to money-lending—a memorandum which appears to have had some effect upon policy—thought it necessary to drag into a paper concerned with the chicanery of financiers and the depreciation of sterling by "speculative exchange business, not only Melanchthon, but Aquinas and Hostiensis.¹⁷ Even a moralist who denied all virtue whatever to "the decrees of the Pope," did so only the more strongly to emphasize the prohibition of uncharitable dealing contained in the "statutes of holie Synodes and sayings of godlie Fathers, whiche vehemently forbid usurie." "

Objective
economic science was developing in the
hands of the
experts who wrote on agriculture, trade,
and, above
all, on currency and the foreign exchanges.
But the
divines, if they read such works at all,
waved them on
one side as the intrusion of Mammon into
the fold of
Christian morality, and by their obstinate
obscurantism
helped to prepare an intellectual nemesis,
which was to
discredit their fervent rhetoric as the voice
of a musty
superstition. For one who examined
present economic
realities, ten rearranged thrice-quoted
quotations from
tomes of past economic casuistry. Sermon
was piled
upon sermon, and treatise upon treatise, The
assumption